

This is an interview with Mr. Charlie Slauch of 4318 South 1500 East, Vernal, Utah, on this first day of November 1977. This is Diedra Northern of the Golden Age Center, Vernal, Utah.

Diedra Northern (DN): Well, we'd like for you to tell us anything you can. Do you want to start by telling us when your folks first came here?

Charlie Slauch (Charlie): Well, I think my father come here in, I don't remember just exactly the date, but I think it was around 1884 that he come. He built his house down here. There's three or four between here and there now, but it's a cement house right down here a ways. It's big, it was a rock house, he built a rock house. Then they cemented it over since. My brother lives there now and this is part of his old homestead, this, up where we live here. He homesteaded 160 acres here and sold this piece here. Then he gave my grand-dad some. Anyway, he only kept about eighty acres and we framed that, four of us boys and five sisters, and we helped there on the farm and run a few cows. Had a place on Green River we run the cows on.

Oh, I don't know. We just grewed up more than anything else. Can't say it was hard, because it wasn't. We didn't have no electricity, had no running water, had no telephone, no automobiles, and we used all horses for travel, wagons and buggies. We had kerosene lights, no fridges or anything, deep freezer or anything like that. We had plenty to eat. We raised a good garden, we had an orchard, plenty of fruit, and a we raised, oh, five or six big hogs and beef every fall. Then you could go out in them days and get what deer you wanted to, and so we lived good.

But we never had no money, money was something you didn't hardly ever see. The fall of the year, we raised quite a little bit of grain and you could trade it to the Co-op, up there where the Penney's store is [northwest corner of Main Street and Vernal Avenue], they'd take grain for trade. We'd trade grain and get what clothes we needed and stuff for the winter. All we needed to go through the winter would be a sack of sugar and salt and pepper, stuff like that. Then we'd take a load of grain to the mill and get flour, had all the flour we needed. So we had plenty to eat all the time, plenty to wear, got along fine. But money was something we didn't see much of. We didn't need it anyway.

Everything that came into the valley here come in on wagons. They had a freight line. I don't remember just when it come. The Uintah outfit built a little spur in Grand Junction into Dragon out here and back, along about, oh, right around 1900, somewhere around there. Then they freighted from there into here. The Uintah outfit had a big wagon that they hauled with, freight outfit. It had four to six mules or horses on two wagons. Then the people themselves, they could get an order from these stores, see, to haul a load in. They'd go out and get a load to help buy a few groceries.

I've hauled, oh, a good many trips on that ol' road. Take four horses and two wagons. We got six bits a hundred from Dragon and Watson. We'd haul from there, sixty miles, take us about seven days to make a trip. If you had a good outfit, you could fetch about 9,000, that'd be about seventy-five cents, be around, oh, \$60 or \$70 a trip, for seven days work. Then you had to feed your horses and everything, so we didn't make much, but it helped.

Then in 1918 and '19, we had a dry summer there in 1918. Didn't raise hardly anything. So we sold our cattle that fall, kept a few horses, work horses and a few saddle horses, and a few milk cows. I hauled corn for the sheepmen all winter. Snow was deep and it was cold, was thirty below, and we'd go out there and stay for, oh, a week, ten days, and haul for them sheep camps. Then we'd go back out. Ever' night come, we'd just throw our bed down on the snow and there's where we stayed. Had to just melt water for our horses and gather wood wherever we could find it. Looked like it would've been a tough ol' job, but it wasn't so bad, we didn't mind it. 'Course we didn't know no better, I guess. But it was quite a hard ol' winter.

A lot of people went broke. One of my fellers lived right across the road here. Well, we called him uncle, Uncle Tom Robbins, but he wasn't really related to us. But he lived there anyway and him and my dad run cattle together for years and years. He was a nice ol' feller. Thought a lot of him. He had a bunch of cattle and he didn't sell. My dad tried to get him to, but he said, "No, they'll be worth twice that next spring." So he bought hay, mortgaged everything. He had to buy hay and then in spring he run out of hay, couldn't get no more money and he lost half of 'em. Then what he had left, he sold for half what he could've got in the fall. So he lost everything he had. There was three or four neighbors around that done the same thing. But we came out, we kept our horses, work horses and few milk cows and few sheep. But I hauled freight all winter. I fed the two teams that way, by working.

Here two years ago, two or three years ago, we was out huntin', out here by Dragon. My brother got where the old Dragon warehouse and office and everything used to be. They tore all that out years ago. But there was kind of a cement box in there, bunch of old lumber throwed in there. My brother go diggin' in there and come up with a whole lot of bills, just bills you know, sale bills, and it was fifty years ago. That was in 1918 they were wrote out and this was 'bout two or three years ago that he found 'em there. I had a bunch here. He give me a bunch with my name on. They just laid there for fifty years, just as good as they ever was.

DN: They were?

Charlie: Perfect. But I don't know what I done with 'em. I was lookin' for 'em not long ago. I was keepin' 'em for kind of a keepsake. But them old bills had laid there for fifty years.

Then we was married in 1922 and we built us a little old cabin down here about a mile below here. We lived there for fourteen years. We had seven boys during that time. We moved up here in, I believe, '30, 1935, '34, somewhere along in there. No, it was later than that, I guess.

In '34 and '35 we had dry weather. No water at all. I and my brother, we had quite a few cattle, each one of us. We went to Green River and planted corn and pumped water out and raised corn to feed 'em through the winter. Got by pretty good. Then I bought this place here. I don't know, '34, '35, somewhere around in there, and we been here ever since.

But our boy, we got a fine bunch of boys, one of 'em died here two years ago, heart attack, I guess it was. We got one boy that was crippled in the Army. He's in California. He was caught through the spine, cut the nerve off in his right arm and the other one went down and out his back. So he's in a wheelchair, been that way since 1950. He was in Korea when he was hurt, but he's doin' fine. He does everything and he's got twenty-five percent in his right arm. He's a great watch repairer, he's just awful good at it and he's, well, pret' near anything. These stands the glass is settin' on, he made them. That one. He's a good carpenter. Well, I heard one guy say there ain't nothin' he can't do. He made bows and sold them for a while, he's shot archery. Two

gold medals in Tokyo a few years ago, quite a few years ago. Now he's got him a new airplane he flies around. He was up here just last week. He was up for a while and went back.

We had the seven boys and they all spent time in the Army, all but the last boy, youngest one, and he was all ready to go and he was working at the Gilsonite mine and fell through a floor there and broke his leg. So he didn't go, but the other six of them, they spent time in the war. My two oldest boys was in that Second World War. One of 'em, well, they both got wounded quite bad, but not too awful bad. They all served in there. I don't know, that's about all I got.

DN: Somebody told me that you used to feed the horses that you freighted with more hay than anybody else. You fed your horses two bales?

Charlie: Well, I don't know as I fed 'em any more than anybody else. I tried to feed 'em what they needed. We used to freight from Price, too. Take us fourteen days, there and back. Quite a long 'ol haul. This dinosaur up here on the courthouse lawn? We hauled that to Watson in parts. One trip we took to Salt Lake on a wagon. But we hauled it out there and they shipped it to New York, then shipped it back here. You've been, I guess, to the quarry down here?

DN: Yes.

Charlie: Well, at that time it was just, well, they was just diggin' it out then. There wasn't a building of any kind there or anything, and we loaded there. We just come in from Watson and met an old guy here from town, Murray was his name, I can't think of his first name. But anyway, he wanted us to haul that out to Watson. He said what he'd pay us to haul it, six bits a hundred. Well, I said, "I won't haul it for that!" I said, "It's an extra day's work to go down and get it and all and I'd sooner go empty than to load it, at that price." So he was kinda mad, but anyway it went on for a while, [then] he sent word that he'd pay more. I forgot what it was now, but he raised that price. So I went down there, bunch of us, to load and that 'ol guy said, "Here's the guy that said he wouldn't load it for that." So he said, "You don't get a load." Well, I said okay. But after the rest of 'em had all loaded, he come around. He said, "I don't blame ya." He said, "It's worth that."

So they loaded me, but the other guys had all pulled out and I was alone. It was getting quite late when I got loaded. I had gone on down three or four miles, oh, five or six miles, to Brush Creek camp and my horses wanted to go 'cause the others had all gone, and they was anxious to get to camp. It was gettin' dark and I come to a hill. I couldn't pull it, so we'd drop our trail wagon.

On a lead wagon you have a horn come out called a trail horn, about that long, and it's just a big long steel bar. Then your trail wagon, just a short tongue with a clevis on it and a clutch chain, pull it up. Take ahold this tongue and drive with one hand and steer it with the other hand. Put it up over this trench horn. Them horses give a jump and caught my thumb 'tween the trail tongue and the trail, and mashed it and there I was alone. But I got crippled up. I had to pull brake and drive four horses. Lord, by the time I got down to the camp, I was practically worn. That hurt so, it was just throbbin'. My brother-in-law was there. He went and poured a cup full of coal oil out of the lantern. He said [leave it] till it went numb in that. It never hurt me no more, just didn't hurt me a bit.

I got out, too, oh, way out here by what we call the Devil's Playground, the other side of Bonanza or Kennedy (?) Station. They had a station every little ways for these Uintah outfits. They stopped to rest the horses and I got off to get me a drink, had a water sack hangin' on the side of the wagon. The road, 'ol deep ruts there, and one of my horses give a jump. They wanted to go. I went to jump back and I fell under the wheel. The wagon went right over both feet, with sixty hundred pounds on 'em. Mashed my feet, but we went on. They cut my shoes off, I couldn't get 'em back on, my feet swelled up so bad. I couldn't walk, but I got out there and they'd tend my horses and I'd cook. I could sit by the fire and cook. They wanted me to take the stage and come back. There's no doctor or nothin' out there. I said no, I'd stay with 'em. I got home and made my outfit in all right. Never did go to a doctor, my feet got all right. We used to have a quite a bit of troubles.

DN: What are some of the other troubles that you had?

Charlie: Oh, I never did have much of any troubles. When I was a kid ,you couldn't hardly find a job. I worked for a cow outfit up here, for a while, Two Bar outfit, on the mountain. I worked there one summer, was sixteen, I believe, between sixteen and seventeen. That winter I fed cattle all winter. There was men, and an old man, he couldn't do nothing but tromp and drive team. We'd start before daylight and unharness them at night and I got \$2 a day. Snow was deep and cold. Then in the summertime, I worked up there with the cattle and during roundup. Then we'd come down and put up hay in the summer and we got \$2 a day for that kind of work. That's all they'd pay in them days was \$2 a day.

DN: You worked for the Two Bar outfit in Brown's Park?

Charlie: No, I never did go down into Brown's Park. They had two bunches, had one bunch down in Brown's Park and on bunch up on Outlaw Basin and they sold 'em. I started to work for the Two Bar outfit, 'ol Bart Owens, then he sold to Charlie Howell. I worked for Charlie Howell the rest of the summer. No, I worked for him two summers. He brought a place, the old Sam Herring place down there in Naples. I think Dave Rasmussen owns it now.

Then this ranch down here on the creek that Arlie Murray had. That was all hay in them days, put up hundreds and hundreds tons of hay, right along in there. That 'ol ranch down there, that old Herring place, them flat hills, just rocky and steep, you could raise hay and you couldn't hardly cut it, was so thick and heavy. Now it won't raise nothing.

DN: What did you do for fun when you were a boy?

Charlie: Oh, we had lots of fun, we used to chase wild horses. These hills out here was full of wild horses.

DN: Did you ever catch any?

Charlie: Oh, yeah, we used to catch lots of 'em. Then we'd get 'em all, a bunch of 'em, in a corral or something and draw to see who rode 'em, get throwed off. But we had lots of horses in them days, saddle horses. That's the greatest fun in the world chasin' wild horses.

We'd go down here, to Green River and cross. One time I and my brother, my dad sent us down to get a cow, down to the river, she had a young calf. He wanted her brought up for a milk cow. So we left and went down. We got down there and we met a couple of guys. They said that a bunch of horses are in Horseshoe Bend. So over there we went. We run 'em all day and that night. When it come dark, I and my brother was up pret' near to the highway where it crosses Halfway Holler up there. Instead of comin' on home, we was closer to home than we was back to the river, but we went back down there and stayed all night.

We was sleepin' in this old cabin or went in this old cabin. All we had to eat was some rabbit. One guy was with us, had a six-shooter. He shot a couple of rabbits and we roasted them and eat 'em. Stayin' in this old cabin, there's a lot of bats and rats chasin' around in there. He was shootin' 'em. Well, here come an old blowsnake around the log, and he said, "First come the bats and rats and then here come g-- d---- serpents." So we got out of there. Went up on a hill. The mosquitoes was bad. Went up on this hill, all of us, and laid down with just the saddle blankets.

My brother, along, oh, it was about three or four o'clock in the morning, and an ant crawled up his nose and strung him. So he got us all up. We went up to a ranch up above there and stayed there a little while. Then we came on home and Dad was pretty mad. They had worried all night about us. We had never done that before, stayed out like that. We should not have done, but we did.

So he and my brother-in-law went back after this cow. They got down there and found her in the mud. She'd been in there, I guess, two or three days. So they worked all day and that night to get her out. Dark come and they hadn't come. My mother and sister, they was worried about 'em. So they wanted me to go after 'em. So I went down and I met 'em, just this side of the river comin'. They was give out; they'd worked all day.

Anyway, the next day I and my Dad went down to get the cow. He took the buggy and I took the saddle horse, got down there and Dad put the calf in the buggy and I was drivin' the cow. She made a dive for the river to get her a drink. That old river, just quicksand everywhere. I tried to head her and couldn't, throwed a rope on here, but I got it on her too late and she sunk in mud. A guy come along, he was hauling oil down there to a gold rush in the bend. He had four big horses, so he put a team on her and said, "Hook on and try and pull her out of the mud." We brought her on home.

There was an old man, he'd come from back East somewhere, I forgot the name of the place. He went down there in the Horseshoe Bend. He took him a little old dugout in the hill there. I used to go down there a lot runnin' cattle. I see him there, oh, two or three times a week. He'd wash a little gold, then he'd bring it uptown and get him a few groceries. Somebody would take him back down always. He lived like, oh, it was heck of a way for him to live. But he was a nice 'ol feller. He was well educated and he stayed there I don't know how many years, quite a few years.

After I was married, why we's down there fencin' some ground off, to pasture. One of my uncles lived up above there around the river, we'd take it in turns goin' down to check on him every few days. We's building fence and 'ol Johnny Slaugh come down and he said he's goin' down to check on him. So he went and in a little while he come back and said he 'ol man was dead. He'd shot hisself down there in that little 'ol dugout. So they went down, a couple of guys, and buried him.

Here a few years ago they built a fence and painted it up nice and somebody stole it, hauled it away. So here two weeks ago, I and three of my brothers and another guy, we went

down, put a steel fence around it, and cemented it in. Have a hard time movin' *it*.

But that 'ol man he told me, he said he's a farmer back in where he lived. He had been out in the field and come to the house and said he go to the door and heard his wife talkin' to some guy in there. She said something about that 'ol son-of-a-gun will be here any minute now. So he said, "I just turned and walked off and I've never been back." His boy come and seen him, stayed with him down there a little while, then left, again. He's buried down there in that Horseshoe Bend.

DN: Did the Depression affect you pretty bad?

Charlie: Well, no, not too bad. Oh, yeah, it did in a way. We bought this place and didn't give much for it, not the way things are now. But them days I give \$5,000 for this place, thirty acres of ground and this house. The old house, though, had to be remodeled, the whole thing, all over. I paid about half of it down and I was payin' \$40 a month, and do you know, you couldn't find a job nowheres. The cattle was down so cheap. I had a few cows, but they wasn't worth nothing. So I went on PWA and that's all I made, \$40 a month.

DN: What's PWA? [Ed. note: Public Works Administration, a New Deal program.]

Charlie: Well, the government will let you go to work for ten days a month, \$4 a day. That was \$40.00. That's all you could make, then have to wait a month. They put that Buck Pasture reservoir up there at East Park. I put that reservoir in there. Then this duck pond down here in Jensen, I helped build it.

My wife's been down all summer, her heart's bad and she's been down all summer. I had blazing ulcers, down all June. My head is partly paralyzed, or something. I don't have it now. I haven't been no good at all, all summer. We both been down.

Been awful poor huntin' too. My boys, they been huntin' twenty years. We've hunted out there in one place, by Dragon, and always had pretty good luck. Well, the last two years it's been awful poor. I went out one day, 'course I couldn't walk around or anything, just drive around in the car. My granddaughter she took me, and Dean, my boy that's in the wheelchair, took us out there. She had a four-wheel drive pickup. She drove us all over out there. But we never seen a thing. The boys, they stayed three or four days. Then they went out again last Saturday and come back Sunday night. I don't know, they never got very many, I know. But they just ain't anything out there. They're goin' to Colorado, I guess this weekend. They got a license in Colorado and they went up there to hunt.

They build houses all up in there, he's a contractor. There's three boys and one grandson, but they build basements and do cement work. Then my other boy, him and his sons, they build the houses. They build all over the darn country. They got a big business goin' all the time. Well, I don't know much of anything else. I don't think I've helped you any.

DN: Well, sure you have.

Charlie: About all they had to build with years ago was a claw hammer and an ax, but they done the best they could, I guess. They've been two houses burnt down here. The old outfit that first come here. I don't remember who did build the first one here. Anyway, there was George Slaugh.

He bought this place and lived here for a while. He had an old log house on it. It burned down and then he built this frame house with an upstairs in it, stayed in it for quite a while and it burned down. One of my uncles bought the place and he built this house on it. Then I bought it from him. The place we lived on down below, my youngest boy lives down there now. I got thirty acres down there and thirty acres here.

The old stage used to go by. The old feller drove a stage. Well, they had one guy drove from Watson to Bonanza and then the other one drove from Bonanza into Vernal. Well, he drove from Vernal out to Bonanza and then back that night. So, he'd stop and pick her up there Friday night and take her into town, and bring her back out Monday morning, and she stayed there. Yeah, I knowed all them Masseys.

DN: Did you do very much dancing in town?

Charlie: Oh, no. We used to dance at the Imperial some. We had a old dance hall out here. Well, we used to dance in the old schoolhouse. We had the old schoolhouse, where the new church house is. It had just two rooms at first. There was a partition between 'em and you could raise it up and put the two rooms in together. We'd put the benches out and dance there. We used to have a lot of fun in there. But the school board, after they consolidated, made us quit that.

So we bought an old hall down in Naples, moved it out where the old church house is. We used it to hold church in and to dance in for years and years. Then we built that new church house. I built the church house there, where the old church house is now. Then it got too small, so we built this other one. Our first bishop was 'ol bishop Simper over here, he was bishop for twenty-seven years. Mighty fine 'ol guy. Then he was Sunday School Superintendent for, heck, I don't know, thirty years, something like that. He comes out here ever once in a while and visits, sure is a nice guy.

DN: I went out and visited with him this morning.

Charlie: Oh, did ya?

DN: Yeah, he seems like a real nice person.

Charlie: Yes, they ain't no better than him. I worked for him a lot when I was a young guy. That was after I was married. He used to have a 'ol hay baler, a 'ol horse hay baler. Team go around and around and we'd go bale hay all winter. He had a sheep wagon on a bob sleigh and a we'd stay in that. Then Friday nights we'd come home. Four horses on it. Come home and then go back Monday morning. Sometimes up to Dry Fork, all over, balin' hay. I never seen him mad and anybody couldn't get mad on a hay baler, they ain't much madness in him. It breaks down ever little while. But he'd just sit down and tell ya a joke or two, and work on it. Never used to get out of patience. He'd come down here and ever few days, oh, wants to wait and visits. We don't pay our weight when we come out and he said, "Well, you wasn't to church." He said, "I thought maybe somethin' was wrong." So he'd come and stayed here for a while. He gets lonesome, I guess. He's ninety-something.

DN: Yes, that's what he was telling me. He's ninety-three.

Charlie: Yeah, that's pretty old. It's like the two guys talkin', one of 'em said, you know, he said, "There's more people gettin' to be a hundred years old now than there ever was before." He said, "I wonder what the reason is?" And the other'n said, "Well, ain't you been keepin' track of the high cost of funeral expenses?" (Laughs)

Young George Massey, where's he now? We's workin' over the ridge there a-haulin' dirt, and at quitting time, I come over with him, rode over from Vernal with him. He got on top of the ridge there and he kicked it out of gear and he couldn't get it back in gear and we took a ride. Now, I'll tell ya, we come down, plumb down into Vernal, just as fast as that damned 'ol thing would turn the wheels. They was a bunch of horses down there by the canal and I don't know how we ever got through 'em. But we went through 'em and never hit a one of 'em. I was scared and so was he. But the brakes wouldn't hold and he kicked it out of gear. I ain't seen him in a long, long time. Pretty good guy to work with. They was that other one, the one with the big nose, Ira. Where's he?

DN: In Jensen.

Charlie: There was two or three of them grandkids. They wanted some salt. I said, "What are you gonna do with the salt?" And they said, "We're gonna cook these mourning doves." I said, "I'll tell ya, if you're gonna cook good mourning doves, I'll tell ya how to do it." They said okay. I said, "Get ya some mud and pick 'em, get the feathers off good." I says, "I don't care whether you gut 'em or not, just suit yourself, but take and get ya some stiff mud and just plaster 'em about a half-inch of thick mud and dig ya a hole down under your fire. Let it get some good hot coals in there and throw 'em in there. Rake the fire back over. Leave 'em for about twenty-five to thirty minutes."

"Oh, hell," he said, "Another of your dang-gone stories." (Laughs). "Well," I said, "Suit yourself, I don't care." So I didn't see 'em till the next day, that was Saturday. Sunday morning I came down to church. I said, "Well, how did your mourning dove turn out?" "Oh, by gosh," two of 'em said, "Best we ever eat." Said they was sure good. "Well," I said, "That's the way we used to cook them rabbits and everything else." They will come out just as clean, pretty as can be, just knock that mud off there, just as clean and really baked. That 'ol mud you see holds that heat in there and sure cooks 'em.

End.